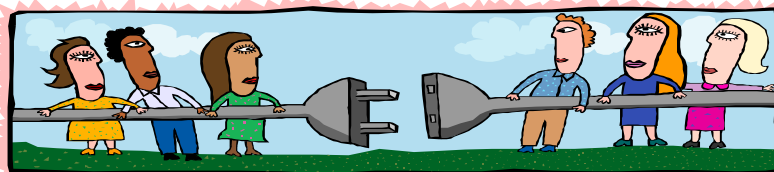


Consumer Connection



Informed Consumers, Quality Utility Services, and a Dedicated Organization for Missourians in the 21st Century

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Public Information & Education Department

A Message from Chairman Steve Gaw:



On November 3, 2003, I became Chairman of the Missouri Public Service Commission replacing Kelvin Simmons, who resigned as Chairman and was recently named Director of the Department of Economic Development. We appreciate Kelvin's hard work as Chairman of the Commission. Through his efforts, we believe our agency is more open and accessible to the public, press, the General Assembly and the utility industry.

Technology has enabled us to bring hearings to you through your computer at work or at home. You also have access to and can follow filings made in a case before the PSC. As a result, you will know what a party is recommending to the Commission in a case and how they have drawn that conclusion.

As the new Chairman of the Missouri Public Service Commission, I would like to take this opportunity to let you know that the Public Service Commission is more committed than ever to providing the best service we can to the residents of Missouri, through the decisions we make involving the utilities in Missouri. This is a challenging time for our agency. We have a number of rate cases before the Commission and there are several other key state/federal issues on a number of subjects including electric infrastructure. We will continue to work hard to ensure Missouri ratepayer interests are represented before federal agencies. We strongly support additional federal funding for Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). We will continue to express our views and remain focused on efforts to get additional LIHEAP funding for Missouri families.

Consumers with utility questions and/or complaints are encouraged to contact the Missouri Public Service Commission at 1-800-392-4211. The Commission's website www.psc.mo.gov also contains a great deal of customer information.

Whether it is a rate case or an issues case, we conduct a number of local public hearings to get information from you, the consumer. We are very interested in your thoughts on a rate case filing, your views on certain industry issues or if you have a problem with your current service. I urge you to attend and participate in any local public hearing we hold in your area. We certainly welcome your information and appreciate you taking time to express your thoughts to us.

Aquila natural gas rate case

Customers are invited to comment on a natural gas rate request filed by Aquila, Inc. d/b/a Aquila Networks- MPS and Aquila Networks-L&P. The PSC Staff will conduct a 30-minute general information session at the start of each hearing. The local public hearing schedule is:

January 20 - Rolla

Information Session 6:00 pm
Hearing begins at 6:30 pm
Eugene Northern Community Center
400 West 4th Street

January 26 - Marshall

Information Session 12:00 Noon
Hearing begins at 12:30 pm
City Council Chambers, Marshall City Hall
214 N. Lafayette Street

January 26 - Sedalia

Information Session 6:00 pm
Hearing begins at 6:30 pm
City Council Chambers, Municipal Building
2nd & Osage Streets

Local public hearings give customers of the company an opportunity to comment on the rate proposal currently before the Public Service Commission. In addition, customers can bring any service related problems to the attention of the Commission.



Chairman urges more federal LIHEAP dollars for Missouri families

On December 19, 2003, the United States Department of Health and Human Services announced that approximately \$598 million in federal funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) would be released to the states. Of that amount, Missouri is expected to receive approximately \$17.3 million.

On January 14, 2004, Missouri Public Service Commission Chairman Steve Gaw sent a letter to each member of the Missouri Congressional delegation seeking additional federal LIHEAP dollars for Missouri families. Chairman Gaw has asked the Missouri Congressional delegation to consider supporting a fiscal year 2004 supplemental program appropriation for LIHEAP. The Chairman stated in his letter that Missouri is one of the states that needs additional funding to help families who have either had service disconnected for non-payment or who face disconnection in the near future because they have been unable to pay their heating bills.

"According to the Missouri Department of Social Services, Kansas City and St. Louis agencies are seeing an approximate 50% increase in new households (first time applicants) applying for LIHEAP assistance," stated Chairman Gaw. "Close to 70% of the Kansas City new applicant caseload are crisis cases, meaning households have either received a disconnect notice or have been disconnected. Over half of the new applicant cases in St. Louis are crisis cases. Recent projections indicate LIHEAP funds for emergency assistance will be depleted in Missouri by February 2004, weeks before warm weather returns. We need additional assistance," stated Gaw.

LIHEAP, federally funded and administered by the states, provides vital financial assistance to approximately 158,000 Missouri households. LIHEAP funding in Missouri is administered through local community action agencies. If you are in need of assistance, please call 573-634-2969 for information on your local agency. You may also email ewest@communityaction.org for additional help.

TREES AND POWER LINES

Electric utilities in Missouri want to provide safe and reliable service. As part of that goal, they manage trees near their power lines. Residents should not attempt to trim trees near power lines. Serious injury -- and even death -- may result when trying to prune trees near power lines.

Remember, Safety First

Every year in Missouri, people are injured when they climb or prune trees near power lines. High-voltage lines are not insulated, and direct contact results in electrocution.

A tree touching a power line can also become energized, causing injury if someone comes in contact with it. Children should never climb or play around trees that are touching power lines.

Electric utilities routinely inspect trees near their lines and schedule maintenance for the high-voltage lines on easements. The utility will prune the tree and determine the required clearance based on a number of factors, including the voltage on the line and the type of tree. Do not prune your own trees near high-voltage power lines. Contact your electric utility.



Property owners are responsible for trimming trees that interfere with low-voltage, insulated lines which connect the high-voltage lines to the customer's electric meter. Please check with your electric utility to identify these service wires and for assistance in pruning safely.

Do not plant trees near overhead power lines. If outdoor plans involve excavation, call Missouri One-Call System at 1 (800) DIG-RI TE (1-800-344-7483). The call will trigger a request to locate all underground utilities near the planned excavation site.

For printed materials regarding a number of consumer issues or copies of this newsletter, please call 573-751-7491 or email joyce.neuner@psc.mo.gov



Who to Contact:

Missouri Public Service Commission
Consumer Hotline **1-800-392-4211**
or email: pscinfo@psc.mo.gov
visit our website: www.psc.mo.gov

Mail your inquiry or complaint to:

Missouri Public Service Commission
Consumer Services Department
P.O. Box 360
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0360